

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 4, 2003

Dear Colleague:

Today we plan to introduce "The Pancreatic Islet Cell Transplantation Act of 2003", and we invite you to join us in supporting the legislation.


This legislation will help advance islet cell transplantation, a procedure that many are hailing as the most exciting advance in diabetes research since the discovery of insulin in 1921. We believe that research holds the key to discovering a cure for juvenile diabetes, and it is not too often when we are presented with research as exciting as the research underway in the area of pancreatic islet cell transplantation.


After decades with little success, in 2000 researchers demonstrated that islet transplantation could reverse diabetes in human clinical trials. Since that time, nearly 200 individuals have received transplants, and approximately 80% of them remain insulin-free one year after transplant. Currently individuals undergoing this procedure must take long-term immunosuppressive drugs, and additional research is needed to find ways to prevent rejection without the use of these drugs so that the procedure may be appropriate for all individuals with diabetes.

This legislation is comprised of four components, all of which address specific barriers to moving this research forward. The legislation would: make a regulatory change to provide an incentive for the procurement of pancreases to increase supply; coordinate efforts and information in this emerging area of scientific promise; collect outcomes data; and create a Medicare demonstration project to provide coverage for individuals with diabetes who have kidney failure to test the efficacy of the procedure.

We encourage you to co-sponsor this legislation that would help move this promising research forward. If you have any questions, need additional information, or would like to become a co-sponsor, please contact Kendall Van Pool (Nethercutt) at x52006.

Sincerely,


GEORGE R. NETHERCUTT, JR.
DIABETES CAUCUS CHAIR


DIANA DEGETTE
DIABETES CAUCUS CHAIR